

XXII Congress of the [European Society for Rural Sociology](http://www.esrs2007.nl)
20-24 August 2007 in Wageningen
Mobilities, Vulnerabilities and Sustainabilities:
New questions and challenges for rural Europe www.esrs2007.nl

WG 1: The future of multifunctionality of agriculture and its relationship with sustainability

Elements of synthesis

The WG organized by Eric Sabourin (Cirad ES UR Arena) and Dirk Roep (WUR, Rural Sociology Group) has received 26 abstracts. 15 were selected and 14 full papers were presented during the 4 sessions (from 20 to 23 august).

The call invited answer to three questions:

- *The relationship between multifunctionality and the sustainability of agriculture;*
- *The different representations of multifunctionality among different countries and stakeholders;*
- *The future of multifunctionality as a rural development public policy topic.*

The papers presented were organised in three main themes:

- Multifunctional practices (8 papers) ;
- Conceptual considerations (3 papers) ;
- Multifunctional services and policies (3 papers).

The 14 papers present study cases in the following countries: Check Republic (2), France (2), United Kingdom (2), Italy (2), Bulgaria (1), Belgium (1), The Netherlands (1), Finland (1), Portugal (1), Austria (1), USA (1) & Viet Nam (1) and Australia (1).

First result: The idea of multifunctionality of agriculture (MFA) is not dead (even in France) but has evolved and diversified.

All the paper see at least some future for the notion of MFA (even in Australia, country of Cairns group)., however diverse Many of the papers consider the difficulties in defining this multifaceted notion, although some see the context specific nature of the concept as a strength. . Some authors note :

- “the ambiguity of the concept” (Rivera & Mormont), “vague but ambitious”(Yakova)
- MFA as a complex but involving and evolving concept mobilized in different ways by different stakeholders (Rivera & Mormont)
- and even able to change the public policies in UE (Rivera & Mormont)
- MFA as a key bridge concept (Groenfeldt).

Several papers suggest the use a more concrete and grounded term, for example, countryside project, etc. Do we consider the MF of agriculture on a farm level or at the more territorial level, for example, region, watershed, valley, etc?

From the first publications about MFA some years ago, we can now observe a positive naturalisation of MFA. It has become a quasi synonymous with Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). In particular the recognition of social capital within sustainable development efforts provides a space of greater acceptance for the

social dimension of MFA. But such naivety in relation to MFA as a normative analysis framework can lead to a circular argument, like Putnam *et al* (1993) considerations about social capital in the Third Italy. MFA could thus become a normative framework: some use it as a descriptive framework, even if, some times the MFA described is not so multifunctional. All agriculture is MF, but in a diverse way.

At least we can observe a confused discussion between MFA as normative framework used to give a picture of an agriculture in a specific time (a survey) and MFA as principle of strategic reference to orientate public policy instrument, in order to maintain or valorise practices, services and values link to public or common goods.

1. The relationship between multifunctionality (MFA) and sustainability of agriculture

Second result : MFA & Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) appears as two very near “wide and ambiguous” concepts.

Several papers presented methods to better characterize the importance and diverse forms of MF in relation to the dynamics of SRD for agriculture situations, types of farms (ers) and even territories.

- Bergmann *et al* proposed some indicators of SRD and MFA. They associate MFA and new rural services (economic, social and environmental sustainability) but note the need for strong rural or farmers organisations and for specific policies to regulate or remunerate public goods management and production.
- Petrics and Jarvela *et al* associate MFA and Sustainable Livelihood (SL) strategies: they characterize the MFA dimensions with a SL framework (SL Framework, variable indicators of SRD) in order to orientate specific policies.
- MFA and agriculture sustainability are also related to farming & rural activities diversification and to endogenous development (Van der Ploegh) by Petrics, Guarino & Dogot.
- MFA is also closely associated to landscape management (Dogot, Commandeur & et al) through orientated, targeted or conditioned public policies.
- MFA is related to partnerships between farmers and wider society (Guarino, Dogot)..

But MFA is not only associated with immediate and endogenously derived success stories: for instance, the valorisation of Bue Rosso meat in Sardinia required a long and largely exogenous organizational process to building social capital (Guarino). There can also be conflicts of interest between farming systems, or between local actors and activities particularly between farming and non-farming rural populations. One of the benefits of the MFA concept is its ability to offer a large and positive framework for analysing and resolving tensions and conflicts. Commandeur *et al* observed diverse issues and farmer strategies in resolving conflicts around pig farming in France: quality process strategies (Bayonne ham), aggressive marketing strategies (Label rouge), or discretion and passivity (Vanish sneakily in the right to stay in business)

Third result: MFA represents the relationship between market and non market inputs and outputs in the production process (Bergmann, Rivera & Mormont).

Markets can add value and remunerate specific services and qualities of production, particularly where these services and qualities are qualified and certified.. While, it is recognised that the idea of MFA is not indispensable to the implementation of such strategies, it is none the less a useful and accessible umbrella concept. This is because the notion of multifunctionality highlights the necessity to take into account economic relationships and transactions that do not belong to the field of capitalist exchange. Instead it uses other analytical categories or explanations such as public goods management, reciprocity, redistribution (Polanyi) and social capital.

Other papers refer to the social and historical building of new market opportunities and new actor-networks (Jarvela *et al*, Groenfeldt, Guarino). These processes are generally associated with strong territorial development policies.

There are not only multi-functions, however, but also multi-values and even an increase in the variety of that which is valued. The process of valuation need not be confined to the market however and may, for example, include notions of identity, attachment, belonging and recognition.

Furthermore several authors propose that understandings of value should pass from the notion of functions to the notion of services (Morris & Posthumus, Bergmann, Rivera & Mormont). Others however reverse this analysis and suggest the need to understand services in relation to values (Groenfeldt, Bergmann). In the first instance symbolic, spiritual and emotional values help explain the origin of social capital as economic embeddedness in social codes such as trust, responsibility and justice. In the second societal values are co-produced with material production process through recurrent and specific socio-economic relations: the so called social and economic structures (Levi Strauss, Temple) or social configurations (Simmel, Elias), Groenfeldt's paper invites us to think about.

2. Different representation of multifunctionality

Fourth result: *the notion of MFA presents different perceptions according to the kind of response it can offer to diverse economical & social needs of rural people in very different contexts.* MFA promotes diverse responses to what are diverse and context specific social and economical needs. As a result MFA policies are generally thought to promote and support diversity in the countryside.

- MFA has led to a dualistic or antithetic representation where MFA is positioned as a positive strategy and productivist agriculture as a negative strategy (Bergmann, Guarino, Petrics, Guillaumin *et al*). Examples of this bifurcated view include:

- Pluriactivity and other functions vs mono productive function
- Diversification vs Specialisation and mono-production
- Specific quality products vs standard products
- More contact with consumers and society vs no direct contacts

It seems more useful, however, to think of MFA according to societal expectations toward agriculture. Yet expectations toward agriculture are also very diverse according and vary according to farmer profiles and farming systems (Guillaumin & Dockes). These expectations are linked to the limiting factors of the farming systems

or territory for certain functions. Guillaumin & Dockes observe 5 types of expectation in France:

- to produce more
- to optimise farming system
- to manage family estates
- to live within a local community
- to improve product quality

The representation and expectations change according to the category of farmers (corporate, small holder, pluriactive farmers, etc) but also according to the profits that they expect from MFA policies, particularly in the European Eastern countries new members of UE (Yakova, Cudlinova, Jarvela *et al*).

3. Multifunctionality of agriculture: public services and policies

Fifth result: in the actual condition of UE policies application (CAP, Rural Development Code), MFA tools of European policy can't pretend to really reduce the predominance of competitiveness and productivity which are link to the response to the main incentives of the CAP first pillar instruments.

Several papers invoke the difficulties to operationalize MFA concept (as SRD concept). Working about quantity of products, hectares or amount of money is one thing. Working about quality of life, it's different. We can't evoke the MFA policy implementation without treating the question of the values, the people and their history, etc. Before to think the operationalization of such policies, how do researchers can study and explicate or highlight these aspects?

Policies are often seen by researchers as ambiguous or even contradictory: the same policy can generate different response and attitude in different countries especially in new UE countries where the concept and the policy are new, or because farmers discover the UE bureaucracy (Yakova, Cudlinova). It seems to be natural, but is it a problem?

On the contrary, you can use these policies as a resource to create opportunities or new spaces. Policies are not monolithic in their application, either unique in their interpretation. Thus, according to several papers (Cudlinova, Yakova, Petrics) in the new UE members, these policy instruments are often catch or captured by the corporate or business farmers (not so different from other CAP instruments).

In UK, the idea of public remuneration of public goods on ecosystem scale (territory) seems to be associated to targeted and condition aids in order to promote public or common goods production or management: Ecological remunerated services – SPS conditional ties (Morris & Posthumus).

Even the idea of the recognition of MFA by public policies is changing. Dibden & Cocklin identify in Australia diverse demands and debates for MFA policies and for the implementation of public policy instruments in this way: Ecologically SD, environmental goods markets, quasi markets of environmental services, National Land Care Programme). Australian society make a pressure and presents new demands in terms of safety food, NR conservation, respect of international agreements, etc

Remaining questions

- farm approach or regional approach in assessing MFA
- value/ in itself and for the society: which kind of valorisation , how to add value...is it the role of consumers to pay for these values. It depends on which one, if they are joint to the product or not, joint to a common or public resource, or not.

Wageningen, 23/08/07

Eric Sabourin (Cirad) & Dirk Roep (WUR)

WG 1 Programme

The future of multifunctionality of agriculture and its relationship with sustainability

Convenors: Eric Sabourin, Dirk Roep,

Location: Dorskamp 1

Monday 20-08: Session 1 & 2 - Multifunctional Practices
14.00-15.30 h (session 1)

Introduction by convenors (Eric)

1. Holger Bergmann, T Dax, G Hovorka, KJ. Thomson

Sustainable Rural Development Strategies and Multifunctionality of Agriculture – a comparison between Scotland and Austria

2. Hajnalka Petrics

Rural livelihood strategies in the post-productivist transition: motivations, obstacles and identities - A comparative perspective between Italy and the Netherlands -

3 .Ângela Guarino

The Role of Multifunctional Agriculture in Rural Sustainable Development in Less Favoured Areas: case study of “Bue Rosso” consortium(Central-western Sardinia, Italy)

4. Mônica Commandeur , F Casabianca & A T Bruins

The function of pig farming in the composition of structures of Southern France

16.00-17.30 h (session 2)

5. Thomas Dogot

Multifunctionality in agriculture: from farmers' motivation to public recognition -The case of Walloon Region – Belgium

6. Anne Guillaumin & A C Dockès

Five types of farmers attitudes towards multifunctionality in France : a study in 5 small regions

7. Aida Valadas Lima

Part-Time Agriculture and Multifunctionality of Rural Areas: New Perspectives for Rural Development?

8. Marja Järvelä, Pekka Jokinen & S Huttunen & A Puupponen: Alternatives of Farm

Entrepreneurship and Rural Sustainability in Finland

Tuesday 21-08: WG session 3 - Conceptual considerations

14.00-15.30 h (session 4)

9. Iglia Yakova

Multifunctional agriculture in new EU member states: an ambitious or an ambiguous concept?

10. Maria Jesus Rivera & M Mormont

Multifunctionality as a node for managing environmental flows and processes of territorialisation

11. David Groenfeldt

“Deep” Multifunctionality as a Radical Paradigm for Sustainable Development

Thursday 23-08 WG session 4 – Multifunctional services and Policies

14.00-15.30 h (session 7)

12. Eva Cudlinova & M Lapka

A Multifunctional Perspective on Czech Agriculture and the Role of Environmental Subsidies in Rural Development

13. Helena Posthumus & J Morris

Multifunctional Agriculture in Floodplains in the UK: opportunities for agriculture to deliver ecosystem services

14. Jacqui Dibden & C Cocklin

Multifunctionality under trade liberalisation: Reconciling the irreconcilable?

WG1 Conclusion (convenors)